

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing method comprising:

a search step of searching storage means for original digital data corresponding to each input

5 image;

a vectorization step of converting the input image into vector data when no original digital data is found in the search step;

a storage step of storing the image that has been converted into the vector data in the vectorization step in the storage means as digital data; and

a sheet generation step of generating a sheet including at least one of information associated with the found original digital data when the original digital data is found in the search step and information associated with digital data which is obtained by converting the image into the vector data in the vectorization step and is stored in the storage step when no original digital data is found in the search step.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the information associated with the original digital data or the information associated with the digital data stored in the storage step, which is included in the sheet generated in the sheet generation step, includes a storage address of the found original digital data or

a storage address of the digital data stored in the storage step.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the search step includes a step of recognizing an identifier which is appended to the input image and indicates a storage address of the original digital data, and searching for the original digital data on the basis of the recognition result of the identifier.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the vectorization step includes a step of executing vectorization on the basis of a character recognition result of a text block included in the image.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the vectorization step includes a step of executing vectorization by generating outline data based on outlines of significant pixels.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising a format conversion step of converting the image that has been converted into the vector data in the vectorization step into a prescribed format which is accessible by an existing document processing application.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the vectorization step includes a step of converting each of objects included in the image into vector data.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein the information associated with the original digital data

or the information associated with the digital data stored in the storage step, which is included in the sheet generated in the sheet generation step, includes at least one of a thumbnail, title, abstract, keyword, ID, date, and author of digital data.

9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising an edit step of editing the generated sheet.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the edit step includes a step of editing and generating a new sheet by selecting desired data from the information associated with the original digital data or the information associated with the digital data stored in the storage step, which is included in the sheet.

11. The method according to claim 9, wherein the edit step includes a step of selecting desired data from the information associated with the original digital data or the information associated with the digital data stored in the storage step, which is included in the sheet, and selecting desired partial information in the selected data, so as to edit the sheet using the selected partial information.

12. The method according to claim 1, further comprising a processing step of displaying an image obtained by scanning the generated sheet, and executing a process on the basis of information associated with digital data selected by the user from the displayed image.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the processing step includes a step of executing a desired process for original digital data or digital data corresponding to information selected by the user.

5 14. The method according to claim 2, wherein the information associated with the storage address is described using at least one of a digital watermark and a barcode.

15. An image processing system comprising:

10 search means for searching storage means for original digital data corresponding to each input image;

vectorization means for converting the input image into vector data when no original digital data is
15 found by said search means;

save means for storing the image that has been converted into the vector data by said vectorization means in the storage means as digital data; and

sheet generation means for generating a sheet
20 including at least one of information associated with the found original digital data when the original digital data is found by said search means and information associated with digital data which is obtained by converting the image into the vector data
25 by said vectorization means and is stored by said save means when no original digital data is found by said search means.

16. A computer program for making a computer execute respective steps of claim 1.

17. A computer readable storage medium storing a computer program of claim 16.

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